

WASHINGTON.

"LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER, ONE AND INSEPARABLE."

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1863.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

The Annual Message of the President of the United States was yesterday communicated to both Houses of Congress, and will be found in another part of to-day's Intelligence.

If on other occasions during Mr. Lincoln's eventful term of service he has been called to discuss questions of more imminent concern, it is safe to say that never has it been his duty to make recommendations and suggestions on topics respecting which there was more of just solicitude in the breasts of patriotic men, or respecting which the public curiosity had been more generally elicited. At a time like the present, when the very elements of our political institutions are melted by the fervent heats of civil strife and political contention, and when the hearts of many are failing them for fear of the things yet to come on the land, it would be unpardonable either to cherish or to affect indifference with regard to the views and purposes of the Chief Magistrate of the country, clothed as he is with powers so tremendous, and which, according as they shall be wisely or unwisely directed, must tend so largely to determine the destiny of the country for good or for evil through all coming generations.

It is significant, as marking the new sphere of ideas into which the country has entered in the progress of events, that if hitherto, since the outbreak of the war, the chief interest of these annual expositions of the President has attached to the execution of his military policy, it is to-day the civil policy which he proposes to pursue as regards the so-called Seceded States that engages the largest share of public concern. Accordingly it is that portion of the Message which is devoted to a consideration of this subject in its various relations which will receive the most attentive perusal and be made the theme of the most elaborate exegesis by critical commentators anxious to discover and elucidate the Presidential thought on this momentous subject.

We have not ourselves as yet had time to ponder all the views of the President under this head with the care which their complexity and the importance of their relations must be held to demand at the hands of all dispassionate men. We are frank to say, however, that, on a first perusal, the general tone of the Message under this head strikes us favorably, and while we are not at all sanguine as to the degree of success which is likely to attend the particular mode of proceeding marked out by the President for the "reconstruction of the Union," it is gratifying to find that he gives no place in his system to that pestilential political heresy which proposes to obliterate State lines in the South, and to throw all the civil as well as social institutions of that section into hotch-potch, for the sake of edifying a "Cosmos" more impracticable than any that Plato ever dreamed of in his ideal Republic; and which, if it were practicable, would need be reared on the wreck of all that gives symmetry and stability to our political system. The President, in elaborating this part of his Message, has obviously found the hardest part of his task in the difficulty of reconciling with his projected civil policy the "edict of emancipation," which purported to be issued purely as a "military measure," and which he seems to be perfectly aware is not of a nature to be easily and harmoniously co-ordinated with a civil policy that shall recognize the normal supremacy of the States over their domestic institutions. This embarrassment furnishes the best possible commentary in elucidation of the difficulties attending that paper proclamation, which, without being in itself a help to the military power of the Republic in suppressing the rebellion, promised to be a hindrance in the work of restoration, unless the obstacles it introduced could be in some way successfully turned. And it is perhaps in a clear perception of this truth, that the President in another part of his Message alludes to "the danger of committals on points which could be more safely left to further developments." "Care," he says, "has been taken to shape" his proclamation of amnesty and his plan of restoration "so as to avoid embarrassments from this source."

The method proposed by the President for turning the obstacles which he perceives to be placed by the "committals" of the proclamation in the way of restoring "the Union as it was," strikes us as being the best that can be devised. Remitting the finality of the edict to the decision of Congress or of the Supreme Court, he could not have done any thing more, even by a revocation of the proclamation; for, whether the proclamation be revoked or maintained by him, the question of its legal effect would equally come up for final adjudication by the Federal Judiciary—the only difference being that, in the one case, the question would be whether, in spite of its revocation, the slaves of the insurgent States were not actually emancipated by it, and, in the other case, whether it is competent for the President, in the exercise of his "war powers," as commander-in-chief of the army and navy, to abrogate the laws of a State recognizing slavery.

We need hardly say that it is the duty of all good citizens "to abide by and faithfully to support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress or by decision of the Supreme Court;" and the same may be said of the proclamations of the President under this head, it being understood that such "faithful support" of the latter, any more than of the former, does not preclude that loyal opposition which is candidly and honestly conducted, under the Constitution and Laws, for the purpose of enlightening the public judgment. Where the Congress and the Courts of the United States have a right of revision, the people of the United States certainly have a right of free discussion, and where the people of a State are required to take an oath, "subject," as the President expresses it, "to the modifying and abrogating power of legislation and supreme judicial decision," they have a right to bring their

legitimate influence to bear in controlling the one and protecting the purity of the other.

The President, we may add, shows a disposition to conciliate as far as practicable, without renouncing the form of the emancipation edict, the natural sensibilities of the Southern people, when he pledges his acquiescence in any provision which may be adopted by a restored State Government "in relation to the freed people of such State," which shall recognize and declare their permanent freedom, provide for their education, and "which may yet be consistent, as a temporary arrangement, with their present condition as a laboring, landless, and homeless class." Whether this "temporary arrangement" in regard to a "landless and homeless class" shall be called "apprenticeship" or "servitude," it must necessarily be one of dependence, and we hope there is no one whose love of slavery is so intense that he would desire to perpetuate its name in association with its admitted evils.

We have not time at present to analyze the details of the President's plan, but we shall do so at an early day, and in the mean time would commend it to the candid and thoughtful consideration of our readers. We cannot, however, dismiss the topic to-day without expressing the hope that the President's political friends will treat his present plan of pacification with more consideration than they accorded to that which formed the burden of his last Annual Message, and which he commended to them as being "sure" to restore the Union, while, at the same time, opening the way for the peaceful extinction of slavery.

THE ENROLLMENT ACT.

We observe that many of our contemporaries are discussing the propriety of modifying the provisions of the enrollment act under several of its heads, and especially that feature of it which authorizes a commutation for actual service by the payment of three hundred dollars. It is well known that this clause has been made the occasion for casting much obliquity on the whole law and on the Administration, which was held responsible for its passage. Yet the friends of the law and of the Administration have not hesitated to vindicate the measure from these representations, and have defended as beneficent and just the very clause against which it was sought to excite popular odium and prejudice.

It is known that we have uniformly felt it our duty to express the opinion that the law was not fairly open to the objections brought against it on this ground, and that the "commutation clause," which appears to have excited the most opposition, was in reality a provision which wrought no comparative harm to the "poor man" simply because it gave to the man of moderate means an opportunity of making the Government his agent for the procurement of a substitute. It is not to be forgotten that this latter, and this alone, was the object of the "commutation clause;" and it is truly said by the New York Evening Post that "to abolish the commutation clause, as it now stands, will have no other effect than to raise the price of substitutes." And this will be a hardship not upon the wealthy, but upon members of the most numerous—the middle class. The wealthy will not suffer; they can afford to pay a higher rate; it is the artisan, the farmer, the mechanic that the heavier burden will oppress."

The Secretary of War, in his forthcoming report, will doubtless state the number of soldiers whom he has "procured" as substitutes for the drafted men who paid the three hundred dollars for this purpose, and with these data before it Congress can better judge as to the necessity of entirely repealing the clause—thus justifying the objections brought against it—or of raising the sum fixed as the price of commutation.

The motive and the effect of the clause, as originally framed and adopted, are, we doubt not, correctly stated in the following letter of the distinguished gentleman who was the recognized "leader" of the last Congress:

LANCASTER, AUGUST 27, 1863.
DEAR SIR: In answer to your inquiry, my opinion is, that the payment of the three hundred dollars and the furnishing a substitute have precisely the same effect. Either of them frees the drafted man from further draft for three years. He is in effect in service, either by himself or another. The payment of the three hundred dollars makes the Government his agent to procure a substitute. The Government has consented to act as such agent. The law says he may, "on or before the day fixed for his appearance, furnish an acceptable substitute, or pay such sum, not exceeding three hundred dollars, for the procurement of such substitute; and thereupon the person furnishing such substitute, or paying the money, shall be discharged from further liability under that draft." No one doubts that furnishing a substitute excuses for three years. To give a different effect to the payment of the commutation money seems to me little less than an absurdity. It is a very mischievous misconception, which, if used by me, I have no doubt Congress will correct. ED. KELLY, E. A.

THE NEW CLERK.

The reader will perceive, on reference to the proceedings had in the House of Representatives yesterday, that its organization was completed by the election of a Clerk and of the other regular officers of the body. The election of the Hon. EDWARD McPHERSON, of Pennsylvania, to the responsible office of Clerk reflects equal credit on the House and on the estimable gentleman who has received this tribute of confidence at the hands of a body among whom there are very many who have had the best opportunity of knowing his worth, from former associations with him in the public councils. He was, it will be recollected, a member of the last Congress, in which, as also in his antecedent term of service, he ever illustrated the qualities which adorn the legislator.

THE CONFEDERATE GOVERNMENT.

In suggesting to Gen. Jeff Davis the expediency of a change in his Cabinet, the Richmond Whig makes the following extraordinary confession: "We have a Department of State that has not been in nearly three years to establish relations with any other State; a Treasury Department that has failed to keep its finances from running to ruin; a War Department in the hands of a chief whose whole studies and course of life has been purely and peculiarly civil; a Navy Department without a navy; a Post Office Department with a very shabby system of mails; a Department of Justice vacant. The business of each department separately shows the want of a more masterly hand; and the united powers of their chiefs in Cabinet council—if councils are ever held—fail to supply the quantum of wisdom the country needs."

The Philadelphia Bulletin says there has been no denial of the statement that coal operators have combined to suspend mining for a time, to keep up prices, and add that the actual cost of producing and transporting coal to that city does not exceed five or six dollars.

"THE CRUCIAL TEST."

It may be within the recollection of some among our regular readers that, early in the month of October last, the N. Y. Independent, an able Republican paper of the Congressional Church, propounded to us the inquiry whether we were "glad or sorry that slavery seemed likely to be destroyed."

This question, it said, was not put to us from motives of idle curiosity, but because it was one which "touched the ethical heart of the question," and furnished "a crucial test" by which to try the hearts of men. As there was nothing in the question which made it a difficult one for us to answer, we gave to our contemporary an explicit reply, and took the liberty which we supposed to be entirely admissible under the circumstances, to propound in return, on our part, another interrogatory to the Independent, and one which we conceived, in like manner, to afford an excellent "crucial test."

After taking over two months to ponder our reply to its inquiry, the Independent, we regret to observe, is not entirely satisfied with it, as indeed we had already feared was the case from the long reticence which it seemed to have imposed on our inquisitive contemporary. We suspect it was only a little too explicit to suit the ingenious purposes of our querist.

But, dismissing all curious speculation on this point, we beg to remind the Independent that it has quite forgotten to make any response whatever to our interrogatory, and, as it was put in good faith, from a simple desire to "touch the ethical heart of the question," we take the liberty of recalling its attention to the point, and of inviting a categorical reply to our "crucial test," without any unmanly flinching. It is as follows:

"You profess to be very sorry for the slave. How much have you done to free him? How many slaves does free to-day because their emancipation has cost money?"

The Independent, we are sure, will admit that our interrogatory "touches the ethical heart of the question," for, as faith without works is dead, so it will concur with us in holding that "philanthropy" and "love of freedom," when professed by men of means, but always without any particular sacrifice of dollars, is nothing better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

PIRACY AND MURDER.

SEIZURE OF A NEW YORK STEAMER BY REBEL PASSENGERS FROM THAT CITY.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE, St. John, (N. B.) December 9, 1863.
The steamer Chesapeake was captured twenty miles N. E. of Cape Cod at 1.30 A. M. on Monday by rebels who left New York as passengers. The second engineer was killed and thrown overboard. The chief engineer and mate were badly wounded. Capt. Willett and crew were landed here this morning.

This daring act of violence and murder was first published in the New York Express of Monday evening, but in so mysterious a manner as not to inspire confidence in its verity. The following is the form in which it appeared in that paper:

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1863.
To the Editors of the New York Express: Yesterday, about dark, I picked up a bottle in the Sound, with a white rag tied about the neck, and found this paper. I sent it to you, thinking it might be of importance. I put one of my boys ashore at Harlem, and sent it to you. I will be in the city to-morrow, and will call on you. J. WILLIAMS, Master Schooner Betsey.

ON BOARD PATASCO, Sunday Morning, Daylight.
Last night, about twelve o'clock, the captain and officers of the Patasco were seized by a band of ruffians, between twenty and thirty in number, who had taken passage on board at New York. They were all thoroughly armed, and among their number were engineers and sailing masters, who immediately took charge of the vessel. The passengers had nearly all retired, and all hands were so completely surprised that resistance was out of the question. The captain and officers were handcuffed and confined below, as also were all the passengers. I shall throw this overboard in a bottle.

Two hours later, the vessel was a great bustle on deck. A vessel is alongside, and cannon is being transferred to one vessel. The craft alongside is a steamer, and from what I can see of her through my stateroom window, she is pierced for cannon. From a conversation I overheard, I gathered that there were two other vessels near by to cooperate with them. Lookout for a formidable raid somewhere.

FURTHER PARTICULARS OF THE AFFAIR.

ST. JOHN, (N. B.) DEC. 9.—The steamer Chesapeake, Capt. Willett, from New York for Portland, was taken possession of on Sunday morning, between one and two o'clock, by sixteen rebel passengers. The second engineer of the steamer was shot dead and his body thrown overboard. The first engineer was shot in the chin, but was retained on board. The first mate was badly wounded in the groin. Eleven or twelve shots were fired at the Captain. After being overpowered, the Captain was put in irons and the passengers were notified that they were prisoners of war to the rebel Government.

PURSUIT OF THE PIRATES.

PORTLAND, (ME.) DEC. 9.—Deputy Collector Bird has applied to the Washington authorities for permission to dispatch the Agawam, the new gunboat now finishing here, after the Chesapeake; and, in the mean time, the Collector is fitting her out with guns, men, and provisions. Two detachments of soldiers have been transmitted for the expedition by Brig. Gen. Rawley, from the conscript camp, and Major Andrews, from Fort Preble. She will sail about six o'clock this evening, under command of Capt. Webster, of the revenue cutter Dublin. Citizens are volunteering as her crew.

A steamer came to off Patridge Island about one o'clock this morning, and the crew and passengers, except the first engineer, were put on board a boat and sent to this city. The steamer then sailed in an easterly direction and was subsequently seen alongside of another vessel. It is supposed she took from her a supply of coal.

The attack took place about twenty miles west of Cape Cod. Capt. Willett and the passengers of the Chesapeake are now at the Mansion House. The steamer and cargo were valued at \$180,000.

The Chesapeake sailed from New York on Saturday, and was one of the regular line plying between New York and Portland. It will be recollected that it was the Chesapeake that captured the schooner Flying Dutchman, and that she was subsequently seen alongside of another vessel. It is supposed she took from her a supply of coal.

CONFLAGRATION IN NEW YORK HARBOR.

MANY VESSELS BURNED.
NEW YORK, DEC. 9.—About half-past one o'clock this afternoon a fire broke out on the schooner Flora Temple, loaded with hay, and lying at the dock above Christopher street, on the North river. The flames soon extended to a number of hay barges and schooners in the vicinity, and they were soon one burning mass. Barges were blown free, then followed aloft and schooners—all falling a prey to the devouring element. The firemen worked hard, but on swept the flames, and quickly the Brigadier General Bailey caught fire and was soon destroyed. The flames then crossed to the next pier with unabated fury, setting the shipping there on fire, together with the stationary barges at the docks loaded with hay. The force of fire on land finding they could not check the flames, a fresh force arrived upon the ground, and, despite their efforts, the fire kept sweeping up in the devouring progress. In half an hour all the vessels lying between Perry and Christopher streets, four blocks, were in flames. So fierce at one time was the conflagration that the houses on West street, opposite the fire, were threatened with destruction. A number of the firemen were killed, and several others were injured. The firemen succeeded in putting out the flames, and thus saving them. The fire is still burning. More than twenty vessels, of all descriptions, have already been destroyed. The loss cannot fall short of \$500,000.

ENLISTMENTS FOR THIS DISTRICT.

Many of our readers will remember that two or three weeks ago a public meeting was invited by a number of respectable citizens to inaugurate measures to recruit volunteers in this city, with the view of relieving our people as far as possible from the impending draft, which is announced to take place early in January next.

The results of the meeting thus called have been the appointment of Ward Committees, each consisting of ten members, who are subsequently organized and selected JOHN H. SEMMES, Esq. as their treasurer, and are now about to enter upon their more active labors, by calling upon their fellow-citizens and soliciting contributions to enable them to carry out the humane and patriotic objects of their appointment.

We earnestly bespeak for the gentlemen composing these committees prompt and generous contributions. All classes of our people are interested in the success of their efforts, and all should give liberally according to their means, as whatever is bestowed will in some degree diminish the burdens and alleviate the afflictions which would necessarily be entailed upon this community by another draft; for it will, we think, be found cheaper in the end to promote by private bounties the enlistment of single men, and who by enlisting will also secure the liberal bounty of the Government, than to permit our working population to be still further reduced by an indiscriminate draft, which would add to the public obligations already incurred in the way of providing for the comfort of such additional families as might be rendered more or less dependent in consequence of the absence of their lawful guardians.

And it is highly important that what can be accomplished in aid of enlistments should be done speedily, for the reason that even now in the procurement of recruits we are brought into competition with other and more wealthy towns, which competition must continue to increase and become more active as the season advances.

Another motive to alacrity in this movement is the very large quota required of this District, and to supply which will test to the utmost the capacity of our limited population. Our quota is larger, proportionately, than has been assigned to any other city or State, so far as its respective quotas have come under our notice. We can only account in part for this disparity by supposing it to arise from the very thorough and comprehensive enrollment which has been made here in comparison with that made in other parts of the country. On this point the official figures we have at hand will enable us to contrast it with only two other enrollments, viz: In the city of Baltimore, having a population of 212,400, the enrollment is 21,532, being but 2.325 more than in this District, with a population of only 75,000; and in the State of Connecticut, having a population of 460,100, the enrollment is but 39,345. Every reader will see at a glance the vast disparity here presented. The enrollment at Baltimore, to be proportionate with that of this District, ought to be 51,734, and that of Connecticut 118,565. The deficiency in the first case is 33,082, and in the latter 70,220. The enrollment of the District (19,327) is even more excessive than were those of the cities of New York and Brooklyn, which upon being brought officially to the notice of the Government were annulled and new ones ordered.

But, as we have before said, the enrollment will account only in part for the large quotas assigned to this District. They range from thirty-three to fifty per cent, and in some instances two or three hundred per cent above the quotas of other places. The draft here last summer required three men out of every ten enrolled. The number of names drawn was 5,764, leaving as the remainder of our enrollment 13,543; and now, under the new quota, (2,730,) with the fifty per cent added, if another draft shall take place, 4,095 additional names must be drawn, which is rather more than three in every ten, and which will exhaust more than half of the entire enrollment. In comparison with this requirement upon the District, having 75,000 population, we find that the new quota of Connecticut, with a population 460,100 is only 5,432; that of the city of Boston, with a population of 178,000, is only 3,500; and that of the city of Philadelphia, with a population of 562,000, is only "about 5,000." (These are the only data we have before us at the moment of writing, all being derived from official statements except the quota of Philadelphia, which was obtained from a respectable newspaper published in that city.) To base these quotas on population, and make them equal to the quotas of this District, that of Connecticut should be 18,102, that of Boston 7,000, and that of Philadelphia 22,111.

We shall not attempt further to account for these excessive demands upon the District. They cannot be reconciled with the requirements upon any State or city. It has been suggested to us, and the suggestion is perhaps well founded, that our quotas have been made disproportionately large owing to a denial of due credit to the District for troops heretofore supplied. We are informed that no credits whatever have been given except for the troops obtained by the draft of the past summer. This, if true, will shed some further light on the subject. These credits ought to be allowed, and most probably will be, when the fact of their omission shall have been made known to the proper authorities.

It is a well-attested fact that in the beginning of the war, and at the most critical period for the safety of the national capital, the people of this District, whose population is confined mainly to the city of Washington, furnished troops largely in excess of any quota which in fairness could have been allotted to them; and that, in three months' men especially, they contributed greatly in excess of several of the smaller States, and, if regard be had to their respective populations, in excess of any of the States. At that important juncture, before the troops from the States had reached the capital in numbers sufficient to protect it, nearly three thousand of our citizens had promptly enrolled themselves as three months' men, and were duly accepted by the Government; and at a later period in the same year one thousand three years' men were also organized here and duly mustered into the public service. More troops of both descriptions were recruited and offered, but, in view of the influx of troops from the States, their services were then declined. Subsequently, however, a second regiment of three years' men were accepted from this District, besides several companies of cavalry and infantry, also three years' men, who were recruited here, but, in order to obtain acceptance, were incorporated with some of the State regiments.

All the troops thus accepted have faithfully performed their duty. The three months' men, after undergoing an active campaign, in protecting the railroads to the city, guarding the fords and shores of the Upper Potomac, and some of them forming the advance of the small army which first marched into Virginia at the time of the capture of Alexandria, were honorably discharged at the expiration of their respective terms. The three years' men, with their ranks reduced of course by the casualties of the camp and the field, are still in the service. And, more recently, two regiments of colored troops have been recruited and organized in this District, and were lately dispatched with full ranks to the seat of war.

None of these troops, as we are informed, have been credited to us—the reason for this omission being, as regards the white troops, that, as the President in his proclamation had made no call upon the District, they were voluntarily tendered and accepted as "surplus troops." We have heard no reason for denying credit for the colored troops. It is a matter of history that "surplus troops," as they are called, have been accepted of Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio, and probably of other States, and that such States have received full credits for all of them. It is owing to these credits that Indiana was altogether relieved

We extract the following enumeration of the three months' volunteers from the annual report of the Secretary of War which was laid before Congress in December, 1861. The same report acknowledges the acceptance from the District, prior to that time, of one thousand three years' men. This table shows the number of three months' men furnished, and the States whence they came:

Connecticut.....	2,236	New Jersey.....	3,065
Delaware.....	775	New York.....	10,138
Florida.....	1,041	Ohio.....	10,426
Illinois.....	4,286	Pennsylvania.....	13,120
Indiana.....	1,191	Rhode Island.....	1,285
Iowa.....	963	Vermont.....	781
Maine.....	768	Virginia.....	779
Massachusetts.....	3,435	Wisconsin.....	794
Michigan.....	791	District of Columbia.....	2,853
Minnesota.....	9,355		
New Hampshire.....	779		

77,775

from the late draft, and that Ohio and Illinois were partially relieved from it, the latter having had comparatively but a few men to raise to meet the quotas then required of them.

It is also a matter of history that Massachusetts received full credit for the two colored regiments organized in that State, though they were recruited from all parts of the country; and that Maryland has not only received credits for all the colored troops recruited in that State, though some of them were slaves purchased and freed by the Government, but has also obtained credit for five or six hundred rebel prisoners, who, having taken the oath of allegiance, were recruited at Camp Delaware and other places into Maryland regiments; and it is also known to the public that orders have been issued directing full credits to be given to Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee for such colored troops as may be recruited or purchased in those several States.

In view of all these facts we think our people may reasonably conclude that if there has been any failure to credit troops from this District it has arisen simply from an oversight, attributable perhaps to the anomalous political organization of the District, occupying as it does the position of a Territory, without having any direct representation in the national councils, or any executive chief whose business it is to look after and protect its interests in national matters. The President, however, being virtually our Governor, possesses the power to do full justice in the matter complained of, and we feel confident that he will cheerfully accord it whenever the facts are properly brought to his knowledge.

We have devoted to this subject more space than we intended when we first took up our pen to make an appeal in aid of the Ward Committees, because we are informed that the facts stated have attracted attention and caused some complaint, as well as because some of the less hopeful of our citizens despair of success in meeting the present requisition of the Government by the means proposed. We trust that the despondent will be encouraged to rely upon the justice of the President, and that all of our citizens will in good faith endeavor to meet the new demand made upon them. And if the effort thus made shall fail we may then with the more propriety ask for the large statement of the requisition to which it appears the District is so justly entitled.

THE ABANDONED PLANTATIONS.

The correspondent of the New York Evening Post writes from Washington as follows in reference to the abandoned lands and plantations in some of the Southern States, which are to be sold for "direct taxes":

"The Government has ordered a sale of the abandoned lands in the States of South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, and Tennessee. The sale, which is peremptory, is to take place on the 15th day of January next. It will be remembered that the sales in South Carolina were stopped by order of Gen. Gillmore, who did not understand his business. The President has ordered that the sale shall take place on the day fixed, and none of his subordinates are to interfere with this sale. Persons who are thinking of bidding at the sale will be glad to learn that the Treasury Department is thinking of dispatching a boat to South Carolina early in January, but if this should be done, those persons availing themselves of the opportunity will have to pay for their passage. It is possible that the War Department will offer transportation to South Carolina and Florida free of cost to bona fide bidders. The Government does not furnish teams, tools, or commissary supplies to any purchaser or settler upon the confiscated lands. No title is given till after the expiration of two years. The law is explicit upon this point. The original owner has sixty days after the sale to appear, prove loyalty, pay the successful bidder fifteen per cent upon his purchase money, and establish his claim. If an alien, or residing abroad, or incompetent, a minor, &c. the owner may appear at any time within two years and take possession of his property, after paying charges sufficient to protect the purchaser from loss."

FROM SOUTHEASTERN VIRGINIA.

NORFOLK, (VA.) DECEMBER 3, 1863.
The claims of the United States upon the property of persons of this city in active rebellion against the Government are being prosecuted with great zeal. Not only is their real estate confiscated, but all personal property. In the course of a week or two several important sales of valuable estates and goods seized will take place. Already twenty cases of confiscation have been regularly entered in the United States District Court of Eastern Virginia at this city. Of these, fourteen were confiscated during the sitting of the Court last week. In a few days a score more of cases will have been entered. Among the property seized there is much belonging to several prominent officers of high rank in the rebel army, who held similar positions in ours before the breaking out of the rebellion. The seizures in Elizabeth City county are quite numerous, and embrace some of the most valuable tracts of land in the State.

COMMISSION FOR THE TRIAL OF OFFENCES.

The following important order of Gen. Butler, establishing a Military Commission for the trial of offences, has just been issued:

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTEENTH ARMY CORPS, Department of Virginia and North Carolina, Fort Monroe, (Va.) December 1, 1863.

General Orders No. 44.—A Military Commission, of not less than five commissioned officers, of and above the rank of Captain, with a Recorder and Legal Adviser, is constituted and appointed for the trial of all high crimes and misdemeanors, which by the laws of any State in the Union or the United States, or the Laws Martial, are punishable with death or imprisonment for a long term of years. The sentence of said Commission will be subject to the approval of those provided by such laws, due regard being had to the necessity of severity, and for punishment, incident to the crimes and disorders arising from a state of war.

The Commission will sit at all convenient hours for the dispatch of business; will be attended by the Provost Marshal or his assistants; all its orders will be respected and obeyed and its summonses complied with. As the motives of men make so largely the element of the crime cognizable by this Commission, the rules of evidence of the English common law may be so far relaxed as to allow the accused to be questioned in the presence of the Commission, always leaving it to his free choice to respond or not to the questions proposed. The accusation will be substantially in the form used in courts-martial; excepting that it should fully set forth a description of the accused, with his residence and business; whether or not he has been a loyal citizen; his antecedents, character, and acts in that regard, so far as known; which portion of the accusation may be put in controversy, and the trial provided the accused be not a soldier of the United States.

All proceedings, findings, and sentences of this Commission are to be subject to the approval of the commanding General, and will be carried into effect upon its order. The following cases are referred for trial, and will constitute such Commission:

Col. G. A. Steadman, Eleventh Connecticut Vols.
Lieut. Col. J. D. Draper, Second North Carolina.
Lieut. Col. J. G. Chambers, Twenty-third Massachusetts Vols.
Major William Grantman, Thirtieth New Hampshire Vols.
Capt. W. H. Lipp, Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry.
Major Peter Haggerty, A. D. C., Recorder and Legal Adviser.

By command of Major General BUTLER.
R. S. DAVIS, Major and A. A. G.
The steamer New York left Fort Monroe on Tuesday with a large supply of substantial comforts for the Union prisoners at and near Richmond. They will be landed at City Point. They consist of 552 boxes, bales, &c., from the Baltimore Relief Fund and the Christian Commission; also, 300 boxes of commissary stores and 600 boxes and packages from Adams Express Company.

Death.

On Tuesday morning, the 8th instant, in the seventy-fifth year of her age, Mrs. JANE HYATT, for fifty-nine years a resident of this city.
Her friends and the friends of the family are respectfully invited to attend her funeral from her late residence, No. 339 Pennsylvania avenue, opposite the Metropolitan Hotel, on Thursday morning next, the 10th instant, at 12 o'clock.
It may be stated, perhaps without impropriety, that an excellent lady, whose death is announced above, was one among other kind ladies, our neighbors at the time, through whose entreaties Admiral Cockburn desisted from firing the office of the National Intelligencer in 1814, after it had been sacked and its contents, printing materials, furniture, books, &c. been destroyed.

IMPORTANT FROM KNOXVILLE.

THE REBEL ATTACK DEFEATED.

KNOXVILLE, NOV. 30.—During Saturday night (Nov. 28th) the enemy made a general attack in force on a large portion of our skirmishing line, and at about midnight succeeded in driving in our pickets. This was intended as a feint to conceal the real point contemplated for assault and confuse our army. Cannonading and skirmishing continued during the entire night.
Early on Sunday morning the enemy charged in strong force upon Gen. Ferrero's position at Fort Saunders. They were met midway by a murderous discharge of grape and canister and a steady fire from the rifle pits, under which they faltered and finally fell back in broken fragments, leaving two colonels, several captains, and in all over a hundred dead on the field. A considerable force reached the foot of the parapet, where the wounded and dead were piled in an undisturbable mass.

We captured two hundred and thirty-four prisoners, and the loss of the enemy in the assault was not far from seven hundred, while that on our side was less than twenty-five. Three stand of colors were also captured.
Gen. Burnside humanely offered a truce to Gen. Longstreet until five o'clock this (Monday) afternoon, to afford him an opportunity for the removal of his wounded and the burial of the dead. The truce was accepted, and the time subsequently extended for two hours.

The rebel wounded are being brought into our hospitals or conveyed in our ambulances to the enemy's line.
On this (Monday) morning the weather is clear, with frost. All is quiet around our lines.

SEMI-OFFICIAL ACCOUNT.

LOUISVILLE, DEC. 3, Midnight.—A special despatch to the Journal of this city says that Gen. Wilcox has telegraphed from Gen. Burnside's headquarters at Knoxville on the 30th ultimo that at 11 o'clock on the evening of the 28th the rebels attempted to surprise his force, and succeeded in driving our skirmishing line to the right wing, which was posted on the Kingston road, and forced it back to Fort Saunders. We afterwards regained our position, and had sharp skirmishing with the enemy all night. On Monday morning at seven o'clock the rebels moved a force of three brigades against Fort Saunders, a portion of which, notwithstanding our heavy fire, gained the ditch but could not ascend the parapet. We took three hundred prisoners and three stand of colors. The rebel loss in killed, wounded, and missing was over three hundred, while our loss was about twenty.

Longstreet then accepted Gen. Burnside's offer for a cessation of hostilities, to enable the rebels to attend to their wounded. The wounded soldiers were exchanged for loyal soldiers wounded in previous engagements, and the rebel dead sent through our lines. Col. Russ, commanding the assaulting party, Col. McElroy, and Lieut. Col. Thomas, of the enemy, were killed.
An assault was simultaneously made on the right of our line, but the rebels were driven back. Our loss on that side was about forty, while the enemy's loss was much greater.

Our supplies are ample for the present. The rebels have been reinforced by one or two regiments of Bushrod Johnson's division.

THE FIGHT BEYOND CUMBERLAND GAP.

CUMBERLAND GAP, DEC. 3.—7 P. M.—There was fighting yesterday and to-day at Walker's Ford, twenty miles from the Gap, between our army and Gen. Foster and the whole of Longstreet's cavalry. We attempted yesterday to cross the river Clinch, but were repulsed. Our loss at the close of yesterday's fight was fifty. We captured four pieces of artillery. The above I get from one of Gen. Wilcox's staff, just in.

THE RETREAT OF LONGSTREET.

TAZEWELL, (TENN.) DEC. 6—9 A. M.—After the repulse of the enemy's cavalry at the Clinch river, on the 24th, their whole force continued to hover around our camp, all these efforts they were foiled, and driven back in several small encounters. In addition, we succeeded in blocking a portion of the valley road near Rutledge, in the rear of Long